

**ARGENTINE CHURCH-STATE CONFLICT**

1. New incidents--growing out of the seven-month Peronista campaign to reduce the Catholic church's political power--have raised political tension in Argentina to its highest peak in over two years. Large-scale Catholic demonstrations marked 11 June and minor clashes followed on 12 and 13 June. Anti-Church rally of General Confederation of Labor members

(on time off provided by token general strike) *(HCB - NO REPORTS TO DATE ON THIS, BUT SCHEDULED FOR TODAY.)*

*SEE PRESS FOR POLICE ROUNDUP OF PRELATES.*

- A. Catholic groups increasingly active against Peron after new (Dec '54) laws okaying divorce, prostitution ("Law of Social Prophylaxis"), granting inheritance, other rights to illegitimate



C. Anti-Peronists, regardless of complexion,

have joined fray: pro-Church pamphlets circulated by Communists and by the major opposition Radical Party (which traditionally advocates separation of church and state).

II. Strongest Catholic agitation triggered by latest legislation (May '55) which--among other provisions--calls for special convention (to meet in next six months) to consider constitutional revision formally separating church and state.

A. Article 2 of present constitution provides federal "support" for Church.

(III)

... compulsory Catholic education, financial subsidies, tax exemption for the church.

(A)

... is involved, political (rather than financial) motives appear dominant in latter actions.

**B.** Representatives of all Argentine political groups reportedly favor new legislation, but many have objected to turbulent atmosphere in which it promoted.

**IV.** Principal impetus for Peron's campaign against his former ally is his apparent conviction that opposition elements in Argentina are working with some of Catholic clergy to organize "Christian Democratic" movement, overthrow him.

- A. Peron also resents Church competition, agitation against his own youth program.
- B. Peron steadfastly maintains he not attacking Church itself, but only its political action.
- C. Charges Church supporting attempts create new "democratic-clerical-oligarchical union" which would continue opposition, 12-year efforts oust his regime.

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- V. Plans to organize some sort of Argentine "Christian Democratic" movement


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A. However, are indications that several of Peron's extremist advisers (particularly Minister of Interior Borlenghi, who reports on internal police and political matters) may have exaggerated movement's importance in order switch Peron from moderate rightward trend of past two years.

B. "Strange bedfellow" support for Church by opposition groups would also tend inflame Peron's suspicions.

VI. Church-state conflict not expected to threaten stability Peron regime for present, but issue remains susceptible to serious incidents of violence until after constituent convention meets (possibly early Nov).

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- A. Issue has given opposition elements--  
especially Radicals and Communists--  
their best vehicle to date for ~~foment-~~<sup>F</sup>  
ing anti-Peron sentiment.
- B. Conflict also serves to create friction  
among Peronistas themselves.